

YMCA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2025

Topic Description

Committee: Nation Building

Chairs: Michael Fisher, Gaby Castillo

Committee Topic: The Cold War in South America

Introduction

The **Cold War** was a global struggle surrounding the conflict between the **capitalist United States** and the **communist Soviet Union**. Following the conclusion of World War II, both the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) saw an opportunity to establish themselves as the **dominant global superpower**. This conflict of interest resulted in a 4-decade proxy war, which drew in many **European nations** and which affected all corners of the world, including Asia, Africa, and South America. In particular, **South America** became a battleground on which the two superpowers vied for **influence**, often through covert operations, military interventionism, and support for **authoritarian regimes**.

Background

During the Cold War, the United States aimed to promote democracy and capitalism while the Soviet Union sought to spread communism and establish socialist governments globally. This ideological competition had profound consequences in South America and ultimately turned the region into a battleground for influence.

In **Guatemala**, the U.S. supported a coup against democratically elected Jacobo Árbenz in 1954 in fear of a communist influence. This set an important precedent for similar actions throughout the region. In **Venezuela**, political instability and economic turmoil led to authoritarian rule under leaders like Marcos Pérez Jiménez and Hugo Chávez. **Bolivia's** military dictatorships, such as that of Hugo Banzer, were marked by widespread human rights abuses and suppression of political opposition. **Jamaica** experienced political unrest amid Cold War tensions, with Prime Minister Michael Manley's socialist policies attracting both American and Soviet interest. **Mexico's** Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) maintained power through authoritarian rule and pragmatic policies, while **Costa Rica** and **Panama**, despite relative stability, felt Cold War pressures, including U.S. military presence.

Other countries — such as the **Dominican Republic**, **Peru**, **Nicaragua**, **Colombia**, and **El Salvador** — faced political unrest, covert operations, military interventions, and support for authoritarian regimes during the Cold War. These interventions and internal conflicts fueled by Cold War politics left a legacy of instability and conflict in the region.

Current Status (1974)

1974 marks a continuation of tension and violence between the **United States** and the **Soviet Union**. The formation of the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** in 1949 by America and allies and the **Warsaw Pact** in 1955 by the Soviet Union and allies continues to polarize much of Europe. NATO nations such as **Great Britain**, **France**, and **West Germany** look to promote **capitalism** and guarantee international freedom, through both diplomacy and military force. An unprecedented number of **militant dictators** gained control over their respective nations during the 1970s, especially in Central America and in the Caribbean. Fidel Castro remains in place as **Cuba's** leader. The nation has been one of Warsaw's closest allies since before the **Cuban Missile Crisis**, during which the United States discovered Soviet missiles aimed at Florida.

The year also saw a significant amount of political turmoil, which included a number of U.S. interventions in several South American countries. **Brazil**, under a military dictatorship

since 1964, continued its rule with President **Ernesto Geisel** at its helm. In **Chile**, Allende's Marxist government was overthrown by an American-backed coup d'état led by General Augusto Pinochet In 1970. **Operation Condor**, a covert intelligence operation supported by the United States, began in several South American countries, including **Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Paraguay, Chile**, and **Bolivia**. Operation Condor aimed to eliminate left-leaning influences and political opponents, often through kidnapping, torture, and extrajudicial killings. This marked a period of intense **destabilization** and **political repression** in the region, orchestrated with U.S. coordination, leaving a lasting legacy of human rights violations and social unrest.

Themes to Consider

The **Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural sub-committee** will address humanitarian crimes committed by Latin-American dictators during the Cold War, especially those occurring under Operation Condor. It will also examine the cultural impact of the U.S.-Soviet rivalry on Latin American culture. Enacting legislation to address these issues is crucial for restoring stability in these nations.

The **Political and Legal sub-committee** will analyze the actors perpetuating authoritarian regimes and destabilizing democratically elected governments, assessing the legal implications of outside intervention as well as potential violations of international law and human rights standards. The focus will be on large-scale accountability and understanding the Cold War's impact on South American political and legal landscapes. Additionally, the Political and Legal sub-committee will focus on restoring governmental autonomy to recently destabilized nations, such as Guatemala, Venezuela, and Bolivia.

The **Economic and Financial sub-committee** will focus on the economic impacts of the Cold War in Central and South America. It will examine how U.S. and Soviet funding of organizations and initiatives influenced political instability and violence in Latin America. The sub-committee will also assess the far-reaching impacts of economic sanctions imposed by both superpowers on Latin American economies. Economic connections, such as the one between the Soviet Union and Cuba, have had significant impacts on international relationships, so it will be the primary responsibility of the Economic and Financial sub-committee to navigate the economic side of the Cold War.

The **Security sub-committee** will examine the security implications of the Cold War in South America, analyzing tactics used by the U.S., the Soviet Union, and their allies (including foreign intervention, covert operations, and military interventions). The focus will be on the impact on regional stability and security, political repression, and the proliferation of armed insurgencies.

Discussion Questions

General:

1. How can the United Nations operate as a collective to stabilize and rebuild Central and South America while in the midst of a major global conflict?

Social, Humanitarian, and Cultural:

1. How will the United Nations combat humanitarian crime under Operation Condor and convict those responsible for widespread violence within Latin-American nations?
2. What actions can the United Nations take to preserve Latin culture throughout the Cold War?

Political and Legal

1. How can the United Nations support South American countries in strengthening their democratic institutions, promoting the rule of law, and fostering inclusive nation building processes, while respecting national sovereignty and autonomy?
2. What role should the United Nations take in the prosecution of regime leaders and military crimes under international law?

Economic and Financial

1. How can the United Nations financially support under-funded nations in Latin America without implicating nations in the Cold War?
2. Should countries be allowed to levy sanctions on other countries during a time of economic crisis? How can the United Nations minimize the fallout from such sanctions?

Security

1. How can the United Nations dispel the foreign intervention of non-Latin countries in order to create a stable and secure South America and to promote security cooperations?
2. To what extent can the United States and the Soviet Union be held liable for the rise of state sponsored regimes in South America?

Note to Delegates

Kindly remember that the Nation Building Committee is a historical committee. This means that **events following the year 1974 are not within the scope of the historical time period** being discussed. Such information can be taken into hindsight, but all discussion and research should be based on the perspective of nations between 1970-1974. Effects of events occurring after this time can be changed since delegates will be creating resolutions that create the foundation of the multifaceted governments.

Resources

1. Bulmor-Thomas, Victor, and James Dunkerly, editors. "The United States and Latin America: The New Agenda." *WCFIA*, 1999, wcfia.harvard.edu/files/wcfia/files/jd_us_latin.pdf. Accessed 14 May 2024

Description: This document provides both important context and breakdowns of a number significant interactions between the United States and Latin-American nations.

2. "Cold War in Latin America." *Retro Report*, Newspank, 27 Jan. 2022, retroreport.org/collection/cold-war-in-latin-america/. Accessed 21 Apr. 2024.

(Highly Recommend) Description: This resource contains links to a number of articles, videos, and interactive maps which summarize important events in Latin America throughout the Cold War.

3. Fontenot, Paul Edward. "Revolutions, Coups, and Regrets: U.S. Intervention in Latin America during the Cold War." *University of Hawai'i at Hilo*, hilo.hawaii.edu/campuscenter/hohonu/volumes/documents/RevolutionsCoupsandRegretsU.S.InterventioninLatinAmericaduringtheColdWar..pdf. Accessed 14 May 2024.

(Recommend for SocHum Committee) Description: Highlights the human casualties in South America due to american interventionism.

4. Saba, Paul. "Soviet Penetration of Latin America." *Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line*, www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-5/lrs-soviets-latin-america.htm. Accessed 21 Apr. 2024.

(Recommend for EcoFin Committee) Description: This resource highlights the economic interests of the Soviet Union during the Cold War and the specific ways in which these interests influenced Soviet relations with Latin American nations.

5. Schmidli, William Michael. "Tracking the Cold War in Latin America." *Reviews in American History*, 2nd ed., vol. 40, John Hopkins UP, 2012, pp. 332-38. *JSTOR*, drive.google.com/file/d/1gQE3KotLkPD2Wajnc24-82eVJPKHOe6Y/view?usp=sharing. Accessed 14 May 2024.

(Recommend for PolyLegal Committee) Description: This resource discusses many relationships between various players in the Cold War and focuses on its impact on governmental structure.

6. "The Technology of Terror – South America in the 70s and 80s." Association for Diplomatic Training and Studies, adst.org/2017/02/the-technology-of-terror-south-america-70s-80s/. Accessed 30 Apr. 2024.

(Recommend for Security Committee) Description: This article talks about the American Foreign Service Officer experience in South America faced significant threats from terrorist groups.